



ROBERTO SIERRA

Chamber and Piano Music

Six Intervening Periods of Time

Piezas Cortas • Piezas Íntimas

Sonata for Violin and Piano

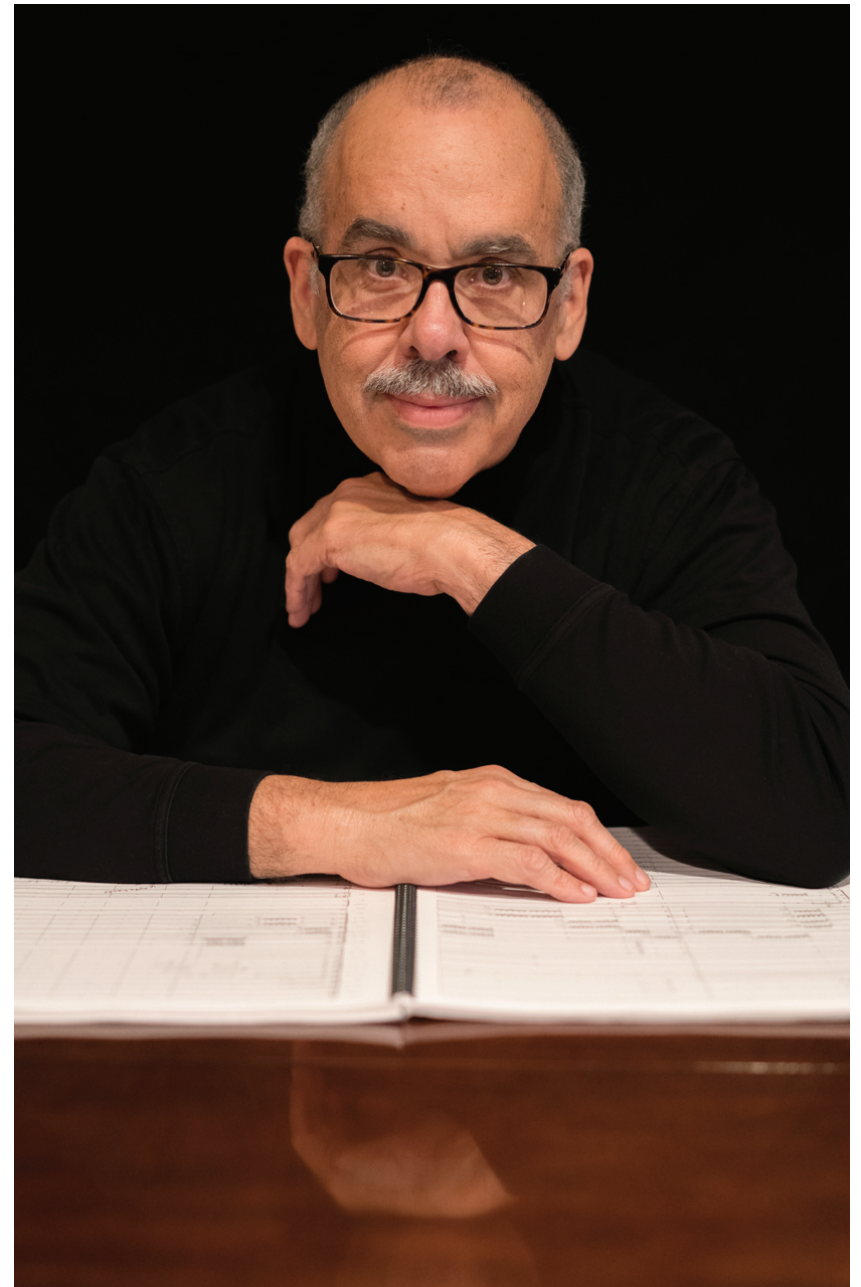
Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano

Fuego de ángel

Continuum

Cheryl Seltzer and
Joel Sachs, Directors

A CONTINUUM PORTRAIT • 12



Roberto
SIERRA
(b. 1953)

Six Intervening Periods of Time
(2019)

- 1** No. 1. Rápido
- 2** No. 2. Lento
- 3** No. 3. Veloz
- 4** No. 4. Preciso
- 5** No. 5. Moderado
- 6** No. 6. Furioso

Piezas Cortas (2018)

- 7** No. 1
- 8** No. 2
- 9** No. 3
- 10** No. 4
- 11** No. 5
- 12** No. 6
- 13** No. 7

Sonata for Violin and Piano
(2010)

- 14** I. Expresivo
- 15** II. Rápido
- 16** III. Con gran expresión
- 17** IV. Rítmico

Piezas Íntimas (2017)

8:26	18	No. 1. Lento	10:22
1:26	19	No. 2. Veloz	1:39
1:10	20	No. 3. Rítmico	1:12
1:12	21	No. 4. Brillante	1:07
1:26	22	No. 5. Veloz	1:15
0:52	23	No. 6. Misterioso	0:49
2:20	24	No. 7. Lento	1:14
	25	No. 8. Vivo	1:38

5:53

- 1:04
- 1:03
- 0:44
- 0:46
- 0:29
- 1:05
- 0:42

Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano
(2016)

26	I. Ser: Lento – Rápido	13:36
27	II. Devenir: Lento	5:23
28	III. Memoria: Rápido	4:31

Fuego de ángel (2011)

29	I. El ángel y las sombras: Moderado, pero muy expresivo	18:17
30	II. Misteriosa danza: Danzante	4:17
31	III. La visión del ángel: Expresivo	4:03
32	IV. Fuego: Con ritmo y pasión	5:30

16:19

- 4:40
- 2:44
- 4:26
- 4:19

Roberto Sierra (b. 1953)

Chamber and Piano Music

Continuum's long history with Roberto Sierra began during its 1983 tour to the University of Puerto Rico, where he was working in the concert office. When he showed us his song cycle *Conjuros*, we were so impressed that we began programming it and ultimately recorded it. We also participated in the premiere of his early opera *El mensajero de plata* at the Interamerican Festival in San Juan. Since then, Continuum has had the honor of premiering and recording numerous Sierra compositions written for the ensemble.

The folklore and popular music of the Caribbean have been a driving force in Roberto Sierra's music since his student years in Europe, when he became convinced that the survival of Latin American art depended upon the preservation of the roots and essence of its cultural identity. To this end he increasingly incorporated into his works the music of his heritage. Like Bartók and his explorations of Hungarian folklore, Sierra did not usually quote traditional material, but assimilated it into his personal style, which is deeply rooted in Western classical and modern music. As heard in his earliest music from 1982 to 1991 on Continuum's *Roberto Sierra – New Music with a Caribbean Accent* (Naxos 8.559263), the composer evokes and ingeniously transforms the folk traditions and popular music of his Afro-Caribbean heritage, treating his sources freely and imaginatively.

In the decade from 1993 to 2002, Sierra's strong compositional voice was propelled by the innovative use of serialism, polyrhythmic canons, simultaneous varying tempos, and elaborate layered textures, as heard on Continuum's New Albion recording *Turner – Chamber Music of Roberto Sierra*. The presence of Afro-Caribbean drumming is, in some works, very assertive, and elsewhere defers to a more subtle Caribbean atmosphere. In other works, the Caribbean element is absent, as Sierra explores colors and textures and moods, and forms from the classical tradition in his reflection on the eponymous great British painter.

One remarkable feature of Sierra's compositional career is his continuous reinvention of himself. Each work illuminates new terrain. In Continuum's recording *Roberto Sierra – Kandinsky* (Naxos 8.559849), comprising works from 2003 to 2008, he continues to be captivated by the music of his Caribbean roots, but his language has extended to other domains. Even when his style – such as the Afro-Caribbean sources – seem familiar, the structure and process of the composition is new. In *Kandinsky* Sierra surprises us by turning to 19th-century classical music as a model, yet Caribbean motifs make unexpected appearances at strategic points!

In this new recording, recent pieces show the composer's flourishing gift of invention – new concepts of time, unexpected ways of hearing traditional forms, and once again Sierra's beloved Caribbean heritage heard in new contexts.

Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs

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Six Intervening Periods of Time (2019)

Is music marking time, going along with the clock, or is it transforming it, creating new regions of temporal space? The philosopher Philip Alperson has written, “On the one hand, it has often been claimed, especially since Kant, that music is an art of time, if not the art of time. On the other hand, it has been claimed that music has what has often been called ‘musical time’, which is somehow to be distinguished from some other kind or kinds of time.” These questions, central to my compositional outlook during the last decade, sparked the idea for these miniatures. While musical materials unite each intervening moment, their moods and gestures separate them. As a single nine-note scale and its manifold pitch combinations are recycled throughout the whole group, the outer elements of each miniature change their temporality and the perception of the work’s singular and unifying pitch structure. As all these elements “play out in time,” they also “play with time.”

This work was first performed by the Israeli Chamber Project.

Piezas Cortas (2018) • Piezas Íntimas (2017)

Piezas Cortas and *Piezas Íntimas* were written, respectively, for Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs. They belong to several cycles of miniatures entitled simply *Pieces*. These collections, looking inwards toward what is expressive and intimate, are sound-journals of moments when my imagination takes my fingers in unexpected directions. Each miniature is characterized by a basic idea; collectively they represent different characters, emotions, and colors linked by a one pitch-structure. The simplicity of their ideas places them in the centuries-old tradition of études and preludes. The word “intimate” adheres to its original Spanish meaning, coming from within – from the interior of my soul, not the commonly accepted meaning of coziness or being quiet.

Piezas Íntimas was first performed by Alfredo Ovalles.

Sonata for Violin and Piano (2010)

The *Sonata for Violin and Piano* was first performed by Renée Jolles and Joel Sachs. It is part of a series of compositions – for solo instruments, chamber ensembles, and orchestra – from the past decade, in which I have reexamined the concept of sonata form. The first movement is based loosely on a Mahlerian model; rather than exploring thematic material in relationships regulated by tonal areas, this sonata unfolds with themes that resemble more the characters in a novel. They enter the narrative and follow their own development and path (as a character in a novel would do).

The four movements differ in mood, tempo, and character. The first represents the introduction of the “sonata idea” with highly contrasting sections that follow a traditional exposition–development–recapitulation scheme. The second, a mercurial *scherzo*, leads to a slow expressive movement, reminiscent of an ancient folk tune that is used in a narrative manner associated with a literary work that invites the listener/reader to go beyond the written text. The sonata closes with the rhythms of a truncated *clave* [rhythmic pattern], pointing to its Caribbean essence.

Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano (2016)

The traditional sonata scheme contains an exposition, a developmental section, and the restatement of the materials introduced in the first section. In my *Sonata para viola*, these three sections are reinterpreted as three movements – *Ser* (“Being”), *Devenir* (“Becoming”), and *Memoria* (“Memory”). *Ser* introduces and explores a group of four notes that are the primary motif for the whole work. The purity of this movement disappears in *Devenir*, where the *Lento* develops like a fantasy, with abrupt fluctuations of contrasting delicate and energetic gestures. In *Memoria*, while new material is presented – such as the *montuno*-like Latin rhythms (known especially from the rumba) in the initial measures of the piano – the music heard in the previous movements is also recalled.

The sonata was first performed by Stephanie Griffin and Cheryl Seltzer.

Fuego de ángel (2011)

The inspiration for *Fuego de ángel* was a place in New Mexico that triggered my imagination despite my never having visited it. The idea of an angel acting in conjunction with fire evokes images from Renaissance and early-Baroque religious paintings, especially some of the early Latin American colonial works that, in fantastic and unusual ways, depict celestial battles between good and evil, such as many representations of the archangel Michael defeating the devil.

El ángel y las sombras ("The Angel and the Shadows") explores the instruments' high and low registers, producing contrasting textures that range from luminous to dark. *Misteriosa danza* ("Mysterious Dance") depicts a ritual dance, perhaps one that an angel might perform before confronting the enemy. *La visión del ángel* ("The Angel's Vision") is a reflection on the inner world of this imaginary creature; one which is profoundly inspired by love, but at the same time is inscrutable, and does not relate to earthly feelings. *Fuego* ("Fire") brings the work to a fiery conclusion, a tour de force for the whole ensemble. All the musical material evokes these images seen through Latin American eyes.

The work was premiered by the Opus One Piano Quartet and commissioned by the Music from Angel Fire festival, with the support of the Bruce E. Howden, Jr. American Composers Project and Friends of the Festival.

Roberto Sierra

Roberto Sierra

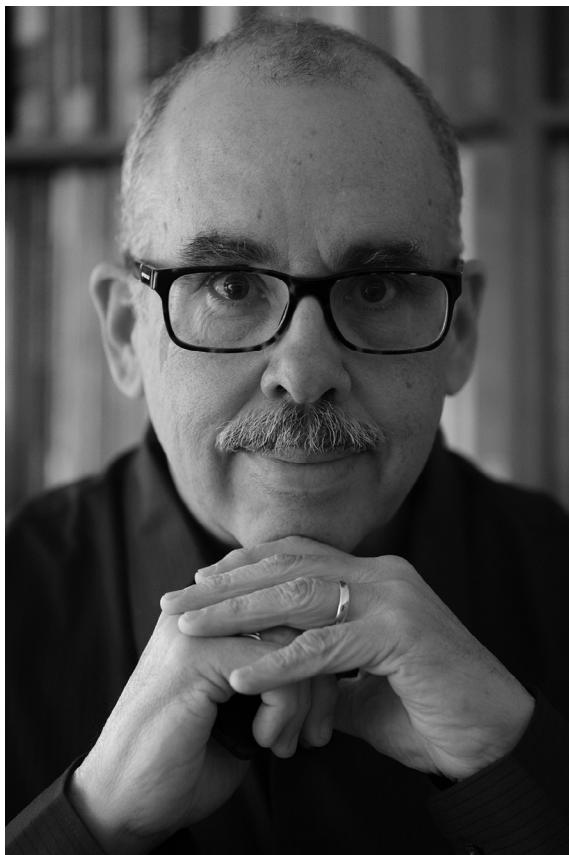


Photo: Virginia Sierra

For more than four decades the works of GRAMMY-nominated and Latin GRAMMY winner, Roberto Sierra, have been part of the repertoire of many of the leading orchestras, ensembles and festivals in the United States and Europe. At the prestigious opening concert of the 2002 world-renowned BBC Proms in London, his *Fandangos* was performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra for broadcast on both radio and TV throughout the UK and Europe. Many major American and European orchestras and international ensembles have commissioned and performed his music.

In 2021 Roberto Sierra was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in 2017 he was awarded the SGAE Tomás Luis de Victoria Prize, Spain's highest honor for a composer of Spanish or Latin American origin. In 2010 he was elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2003 he was awarded the Academy Award in Music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Roberto Sierra was born in 1953 in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico. He studied composition both in Puerto Rico and Europe, where one of his teachers was György Ligeti at the Hochschule für Musik in Hamburg, Germany. The works of Roberto Sierra are published principally by Subito Music (ASCAP).

www.robertosierra.com

Continuum®

Internationally renowned ensemble, Continuum, directed by Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs, is acclaimed for its musical explorations and bringing to the public little-known, exceptional composers from around the world. In New York City, it has presented 135 concerts in individual-composer retrospective and thematic format since its founding in 1966. Continuum has also presented concerts and residencies for decades at colleges, universities and music societies in the United States. The ensemble has toured frequently in Europe, the former Soviet Union, South America, Mexico, and Central and Eastern Asia, and has appeared at major international festivals, including eight visits to Mongolia. These activities earned Continuum the Siemens international award for distinguished service to music and four ASCAP/Chamber Music America Awards for Adventurous Programming. Continuum has an extensive discography on a number of labels, including portraits of Cowell, Crawford Seeger, Erickson, Felzer, Ives, Kirchner, Nancarrow, Sierra, and Thomson on Naxos. Continuum has also recorded for nationwide American radio broadcast, as well as for stations in the UK, Germany, France, Slovakia, and Switzerland, and has made films for CBS TV and the educational network.

www.continuum-ensemble-ny.org



Photo: Gittings

Clarinetist **Moran Katz** won all top prizes at the 2013 Ima Hogg Competition (Texas), and in 2009 First Prize at the Freiburg International Clarinet Competition, Second Prize at the Beijing International Clarinet Competition, and top prizes at the Midland-Odessa “National Young Artist Competition” (Texas). She has performed solo and chamber concerts and toured with Continuum extensively in the United States, Europe and Mongolia. She received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees and Artist Diploma from The Juilliard School. Katz was a member of Ensemble ACJW (now known as Ensemble Connect), a program of Carnegie Hall, The Juilliard School, and the Weill Music Institute, performing chamber music at Carnegie Hall and bringing classical music to students in New York City public schools.

www.katzmoran.com



Photo: Matt Dine, courtesy Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

Violinist **Renée Jolles** enjoys an eclectic career as a soloist, chamber artist, and pedagogue. She has premiered hundreds of works, including the first US performance of Schnittke’s *Violin Concerto No. 2*. She is a member of the Jolles Duo, Continuum, Intimate Voices, and the Bedford Chamber Players and is concertmaster of the GRAMMY Award-winning, conductor-less Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Festival appearances include Marlboro, Ravinia, Cape May, Bowdoin, Bach Virtuosi, Rockport, and CMC East. She is a featured soloist or chamber artist on over 30 recordings, including Continuum’s albums of Oleg Felzer and Roberto Sierra. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Jolles is the Wegman Family Professor of Violin at the Eastman School of Music, where she received the Eisenhart Award for Excellence in Teaching and directs Eastman’s celebrated Holocaust Remembrance Concerts and the Eastman Virtuosi.

www.esm.rochester.edu/directory/jolles-renee



Photo: John Gurrin

Stephanie Griffin is an innovative composer and violist with an eclectic musical vision. Born in Canada and based in New York City, she has performed extensively abroad and most frequently in Asia. Founder of the Momenta Quartet in 2004, she is also a member of the Argento Chamber Ensemble and Continuum; principal violist of the Princeton Symphony Orchestra; and member of the viola faculty at Brooklyn and Hunter Colleges. She is the recipient of composition fellowships from the Jerome Foundation and the New York Foundation for the Arts, and has been a Music Omi fellow. Griffin holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from The Juilliard School, where she studied with Samuel Rhodes, and has recorded for the Tzadik, Innova, Naxos, Aeon, New World and Albany record labels. www.stephaniegriffinviola.com

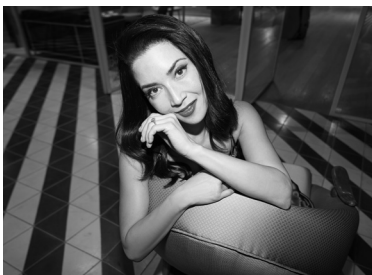


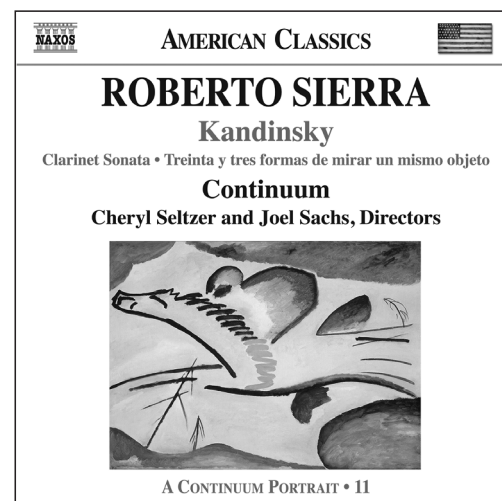
Photo: Alan Shafransky

Winner of the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, cellist **Kristina Reiko Cooper** has appeared as a soloist with the Prague Chamber Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and has toured with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra and made her solo Carnegie Hall debut with the Tel Aviv Academy Orchestra. Festival performances include Musicians from Marlboro, Aspen Music Festival, Bang on a Can All-Stars and the World Expo, and television appearances on CNN, CBS *60 Minutes*, and a PBS Special. Her discography includes Roberto Sierra's *Cello Sonata* with Continuum, a recital DVD, and her solo album, *Around the World with Love*. Reiko Cooper is visiting professor of the Tel Aviv University in Israel. She earned her Bachelor of Music, Master of Music, and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees at The Juilliard School. www.kristinareikocooper.com

Also available from Continuum



8.559263



8.559849



Photo: Rosalie O'Connor

Conductor and pianist **Joel Sachs**, co-director of Continuum, has appeared in hundreds of Continuum performances in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and on all Continuum recordings, primarily on Naxos; conducted orchestras and ensembles throughout Europe, Asia, and Latin America; recorded in Mexico and Iceland; and held new-music residencies internationally. During his half-century at The Juilliard School, from which he retired in 2022, Sachs founded and conducted the New Juilliard Ensemble, a chamber orchestra for new music; produced and directed the annual Focus! festival; directed the school's concerts at MoMA Summergarden; and taught music history. He received Columbia University's Alice M. Ditson Conductor's Award for service to American music; honorary membership in Phi Beta Kappa at Harvard University saluting his work for new music; and Poland's Gloria Artis Medal for his service to Polish music. Sachs received his BA at Harvard and MA and PhD at Columbia. He has published books about American composer Henry Cowell and Beethoven's contemporary Johann Nepomuk Hummel.



Photo: Nan Melville

Pianist **Cheryl Seltzer** has been co-director of Continuum since co-founding it in 1966. Active in contemporary music since studying at Mills College with composers Darius Milhaud, Leon Kirchner, and Lawrence Moss, she also holds graduate degrees in musicology from Columbia University. She made her professional debut with the San Francisco Symphony, has participated in the Marlboro and Tanglewood Festivals, and appears as a soloist and ensemble performer in contemporary and traditional music. Her Naxos recordings include works by Henry Cowell, Robert Erickson, Oleg Felzer, Charles Ives, Leon Kirchner, Conlon Nancarrow, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Roberto Sierra, and Virgil Thomson. She has also recorded for Bridge, New Albion, TNC, Vox, Nonesuch, CRI, and Musical Heritage Society, among others. She is on the piano faculty of the Lucy Moses School at the Kaufman Music Center (New York), where she directed the Young People's Program for ten years, and is an officer of the Stefan Wolpe Society and the Dwight and Ursula Mamlok Foundation.

**Roberto
SIERRA**
(b. 1953)

Chamber and Piano Music

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1–6 | Six Intervening Periods of Time
(2019)* | 8:26 |
| 7–13 | Piezas Cortas (2018)* | 5:53 |
| 14–17 | Sonata for Violin and Piano (2010)* | 16:19 |
| 18–25 | Piezas Íntimas (2017) | 10:22 |
| 26–28 | Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano
(2016)* | 13:36 |
| 29–32 | Fuego de ángel (2011)* | 18:17 |

*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Continuum®

Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs, Directors

Moran Katz, Clarinet 1–6
Renée Jolles, Violin 14–17 29–32
Stephanie Griffin, Viola 1–6 26–32
Kristina Reiko Cooper, Cello 29–32
Cheryl Seltzer, Piano 26–28
Joel Sachs, Piano 1–25 29–32

A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet.

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26–28, 19 January 2023 1–6 and 6 February 2024 7–13 18–25

at Oktaven Audio, Mount Vernon, New York, USA

Producers: Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs, assisted by Emilie-Anne

Gendron, Stephanie Griffin, Moran Katz and Chieh-Fan Yiu

Engineer: David Merrill

Editors: David Merrill, Cheryl Seltzer, Joel Sachs

Booklet notes: Cheryl Seltzer, Joel Sachs, Roberto Sierra

Publisher: Subito Music • Piano: Steinway

Cover photograph by Virginia Sierra



AMERICAN CLASSICS

The music of GRAMMY-nominated and Latin GRAMMY-winning composer, Roberto Sierra, is performed worldwide and has long been admired for its confluence of Caribbean elements and inventive modernist language. The works on this album cover a decade's worth of composition and examine crucial concepts – the idea of time in music; creative new applications of sonata form with regard to mood, tempo and character; and evocations of images seen through Latin American eyes. Continuum, directed by Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs, has enjoyed a 40-year friendship with Sierra, receiving dedications and premiering numerous of his compositions.

With thanks to the New York State
Council on the Arts, a State Agency

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
73:53